

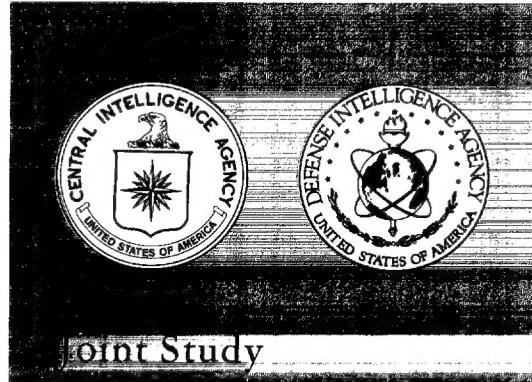
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Weekly Survey of Communist Military Developments in Indochina

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10 April 1974

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10 April 1974

Fifty-Eighth Report

WEEKLY SURVEY OF COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA*

(This report covers the period April 3-9, 1974)

The Key Points

- Seven new regular infiltration groups were detected entering the pipeline in North Vietnam during the past week -- six destined for COSVN and one for the B-3 Front. This heavy infiltration to South Vietnam, particularly to the COSVN area, continued to reduce the gap between this year's total infiltration and that of a year ago.
- Another North Vietnamese antiaircraft artillery regiment has withdrawn from northern South Vietnam, the fourth such unit to do so since December 1973.
- Logistic activity near Vinh, North Vietnam, continued to be light last week, suggesting that Hanoi will not introduce large shipments of new supplies into the logistics system this dry season. Cargo within the system, however, continues to be moved south; truck traffic observed in Laos and South Vietnam was heavy again last week.
- New transportation-related construction activity is under way in the Dong Hoi area of North Vietnam. In northern South Vietnam, the Communists are extending a series of roads from their rear bases and supply lines in western Quang Nam Province into the province's strategic lowlands.
- Communist forces have increased the threat to Hau Nghia Province by deploying additional units toward the area of recent heavy fighting.

* This report has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.

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Preface

This report is the fifty-eighth in a series summarizing evidence received during the reporting period of (I) Communist efforts to infiltrate new manpower and military supplies toward and into South Vietnam, (II) significant Communist combat activity, and (III) other developments affecting Communist military capabilities in Indochina.

DETAILS

I. Infiltration and Redeployments of North Vietnamese Personnel and Military Supplies

Personnel Infiltration

1. Hanoi continued to send troops south at a rapid pace last week, as seven new regular infiltration groups were detected entering the pipeline in North Vietnam. Four of the groups (all destined for COSVN), however, previously were included in our compilation of infiltration starts as "gap-filled" groups. Of the remaining three groups, each with an estimated strength of 500 troops, two are en route to the COSVN area and the other to the B-3 Front. The detection of the latter group suggests that another unobserved 500-man group (included in the table below) also has been committed to infiltrate the B-3 Front. Besides troop infiltration, 11 special-purpose groups with about 600 personnel were detected at the top of the pipeline in North Vietnam and five other groups consisting of some 75 specialists were observed in southern Laos last week. More than three-quarters of these personnel are destined for COSVN.

**Comparative Starts of Troops
from North Vietnam, by Destination**

September 1 - April 9

	1972-73	1973-74
Total	85,000	78,500
MR Tri-Thien	26,000	2,000
MR 5	9,000	8,500
B-3 Front	14,000	9,500
COSVN	25,000	36,000
Southern Laos/MR 559	11,000	22,500

2. The number of troops who have departed from North Vietnam in the 1973/74 infiltration cycle continues to approach that of the comparable period a year ago. This is attributable to both the heavy movement of troops observed in recent weeks and the slack period of infiltration in the 1972/73 cycle between mid-March and mid-May when only about 1,000 troops began their southward journey. The larger number of troops infiltrating COSVN in the 1973/74 cycle has been a primary factor in narrowing the gap, suggesting that Hanoi still is focusing its efforts on

rebuilding Communist units there. Total troop infiltration during the 1973/74 cycle would equal that of 1972/73 - 94,000 troops - if the North Vietnamese send an average of about 5,000 troops south per month through the end of June. This is about one battalion-sized group every three days, about one-third the rate observed since the beginning of this year.

3. [redacted] several infiltration groups sent south by Hanoi are composed of South Vietnamese personnel [redacted]

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[redacted] groups scheduled to transit its area that evening were South Vietnamese. It was not revealed, however, whether these groups were composed of troops or special-purpose personnel [redacted]

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[redacted] two North Vietnamese training battalions identified as "South Vietnamese guerrilla units" were reported to be preparing for infiltration. Although at the time this was believed to be a reference to North Vietnamese units being trained in guerrilla tactics for use in South Vietnam,

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[redacted] The extent to which Hanoi is infiltrating South Vietnamese is unknown. It may, however, be related to the increase of northbound personnel during the past few months, which included a sizable number of personnel identified only as "transients." These personnel may have gone north for training and are now being infiltrated back into South Vietnam.

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4. A new command entity, Group 174, has been established in North Vietnam, apparently to handle personnel moving both northward and southward through the BT 8 area. The group, [redacted]

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[redacted] may have been created as early as January this year. It is still uncertain, however, whether Group 174 is to oversee all rear services activity or is coequal with BT 8, which is still involved in transportation activity.

Redeployments

5. [redacted] the NVA 216th Antiaircraft Artillery (AAA) Regiment has withdrawn from Quang Tri Province to Nghe An Province in the North Vietnamese Panhandle. The unit apparently pulled out of South Vietnam sometime in late March and is the fourth AAA regiment to return north since December 1973. This withdrawal further reduces the North Vietnamese air defense threat in South Vietnam to 22 regiments (21 AAA and one SAM) and some 21,000 men. There are now 17 regiments in MR 1, at least three in western MR 2 and two in northern MR 3 (see the map on Communist and South Vietnamese combat forces).

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Communist and South Vietnamese Regular Combat Forces in South Vietnam

South Vietnam

		Regular Combat Forces	MR 1
VC/NVA ¹	RVNAF ²	VC/NVA	RVNAF
182,000	372,000	84,000	103,000
		325th	VNMC
		324B	Airborne
		304th	1st
		711th	2nd
		2nd ³	3rd
		673rd AAA	Regional Forces

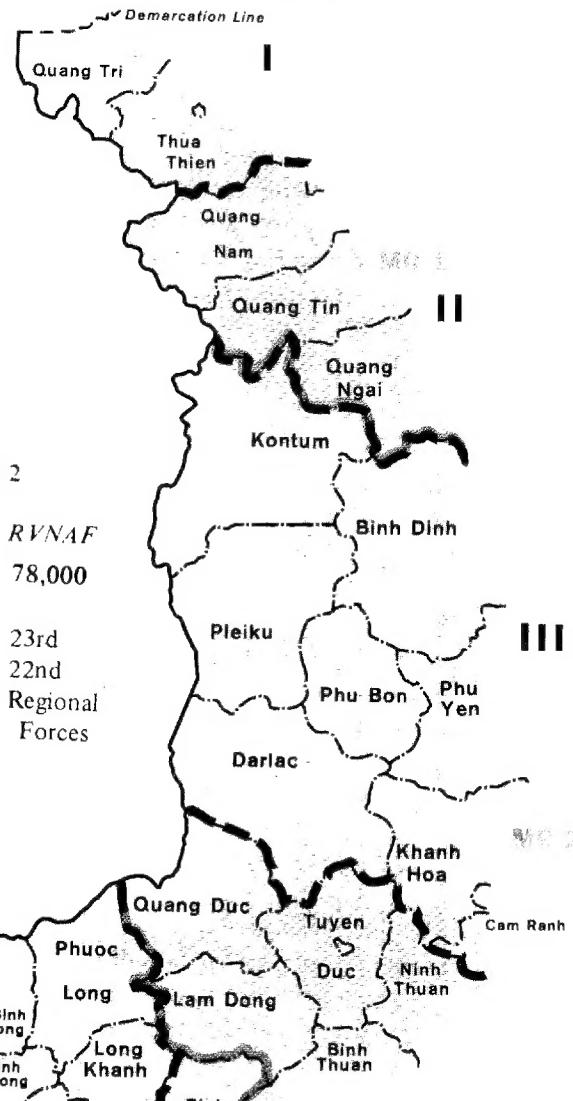
1. Includes VC/NVA personnel in ground combat, combat support, and air defense units and local force companies and platoons.

2. RVNAF Ground Order of Battle. Includes assigned personnel in ARVN/VNMC ground combat and combat support units, and Regional Force battalions. Although present for duty strength is no longer available, it is estimated to be about 85% of assigned strength.

3. Only one infantry regiment subordinate to the division.

		MR 3
VC/NVA	RVNAF	
39,000	94,000	
		9th
		25th
		7th
		18th
		5th
		377th AAA
		Regional Forces
		429th Sap Cmd
		69th Arty Cmd

		MR 4
VC/NVA	RVNAF	
22,000	97,000	
		1st ³
		21st
		9th
		7th
		Regional Forces



Military region boundary
 Province boundary
 ICCS region boundary

0 25 50 75 Miles
 0 25 50 75 Kilometers

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*Movement of Military Equipment and Supplies**North Vietnam*

6. As in recent weeks, logistic activity in central North Vietnam was light last week. Only a few small supply shipments were detected.

three railroad cars of 37-mm AAA ammunition had been received at the Cho Si Railroad Station near Vinh destined for units in northern Laos. This lack of heavy logistic activity during the past month -- in January and February logistics units near Vinh were handling several hundred tons of cargo daily -- suggests that the Communists probably will not introduce any large quantities of new materiel into the logistic system during the rest of this dry season.*

7. In contrast to the low level of activity near Vinh, however, substantial supply shipments were detected farther south between Quang Khe and the DMZ, as the North Vietnamese continued to move supplies already in the system southward. Regular reporting was received on large shipments between Communist military units during the week, involving the movement of some 100-200 tons of cargo daily. As in past weeks, most of the materiel shipped was food, although some ordnance also was moved.

a Communist unit in the southern part of the Panhandle had received about 100 tons of food and 10 tons of 105-mm ammunition and had more than 900 tons of food and 35 tons of ordnance in storage.

Laos

8. Heavy logistic activity apparently continued in Laos during the reporting period, although limited aerial reconnaissance of the main supply corridor in Laos again made it difficult to measure the precise level of activity from Tchepone to the tri-border area. On most days, fewer than 50 trucks were observed moving south. Field analysis of the photography, however, continues to indicate that the road is being heavily used, suggesting that significant numbers of trucks may be moving through the Panhandle units undetected.

in the Panhandle reportedly handled at least 200 trucks during April 2-3, although little activity was detected later in the week.

South Vietnam

9. In South Vietnam, the Communists continued to make heavy use of Route 9 in Quang Tri Province. photography showed 170

* Manpower problems may be contributing to the recent reduction in supplies entering the system. On April 5, BT 8 reported that, because of a shortage of logistic personnel, it was using administrative and civilian personnel to handle cargo.

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trucks along a 10-mile section of Route 9 east of Khe Sanh. Except for this activity, no other significant logistic movement was detected. Although the Communists' western supply route in South Vietnam also probably is sustaining heavy traffic.

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II. Significant Communist Combat Activity

10. Overall Communist cease-fire violations decreased last week to a daily average of 90, in comparison with the prior week's 112, reversing a month-long upward trend. Casualties on both sides also declined from 111 daily to 90 for the Communists and from 44 to 29 for the ARVN. Activity has declined in all military regions and consists primarily of minor attacks-by-fire, limited ground probes, and harassing actions. The situation, however, remains tense in Kontum Province of MR 2 and in the Duc Hue Ranger Camp area of Hau Nghia Province in MR 3. On April 9, for example, the Communists shelled the camp with some 50 105-mm artillery rounds.

III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Military Capabilities in Indochina

Communist Units Threaten Hau Nghia Province in GVN MR 3

11. The Communists in southern South Vietnam are focusing their attention on Hau Nghia Province, an important area to them because of its proximity to their large supply reserves in Svay Rieng and Tay Ninh Provinces and the infiltration corridor leading into the Delta from MR 3. Sharp fighting broke out in the province's Duc Hue District in late March when elements of the 6th Regiment of the NVA 5th Infantry Division attacked the South Vietnamese Ranger camp just west of the district capital. Although there has been evidence suggesting that the 6th Regiment was to move into GVN MR 4, recent communications indicate that the unit probably will remain at least temporarily in the province.

12. In addition to the 6th Regiment, which moved into Hau Nghia from Tay Ninh Province in mid-March, the NVA 5th Division's 174th Regiment and possibly other elements of the division deployed to the area in early April. Moreover, the 95C Regiment of the NVA 9th Infantry Division also has recently moved from its position in northern Binh Duong Province toward the northeastern border of Hau Nghia, where three other Communist infantry regiments are located. These recent deployments may have been coordinated by a new Communist tactical authority in Binh Long Province, whose pattern of communications since late March suggests that it may have been activated to control tactical

operations in Hau Nghia. Overall, the Communist threat to government positions in Hau Nghia has been significantly increased, and an early resumption of hostilities there is possible.

New Construction Activity Seen Near Dong Hoi

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13. [redacted] photography of North Vietnam showed new construction on the abandoned railroad right-of-way near Dong Hoi in the southern Panhandle. Two large rectangular areas on or adjacent to the rail bed eight miles north and five miles south of Dong Hoi have been cleared. The DoD believes that the clearing and fresh earthwork seen at the two sites reflect initial construction of probable rail sidings and station facilities, presaging rehabilitation of the rail line between Vinh and Communist-held areas in Quang Tri Province, South Vietnam. Although CIA acknowledges that the construction may be rail-related, it believes that the sites probably are being developed as storage and housing facilities to support vehicle traffic along Routes 1A and 101, which meet the abandoned railroad at these two points. Similar facilities have been built along other sections of these key routes leading across the DMZ since the cease-fire.

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*Communists Extending and Upgrading Motorable Routes
in the Northern Half of South Vietnam*

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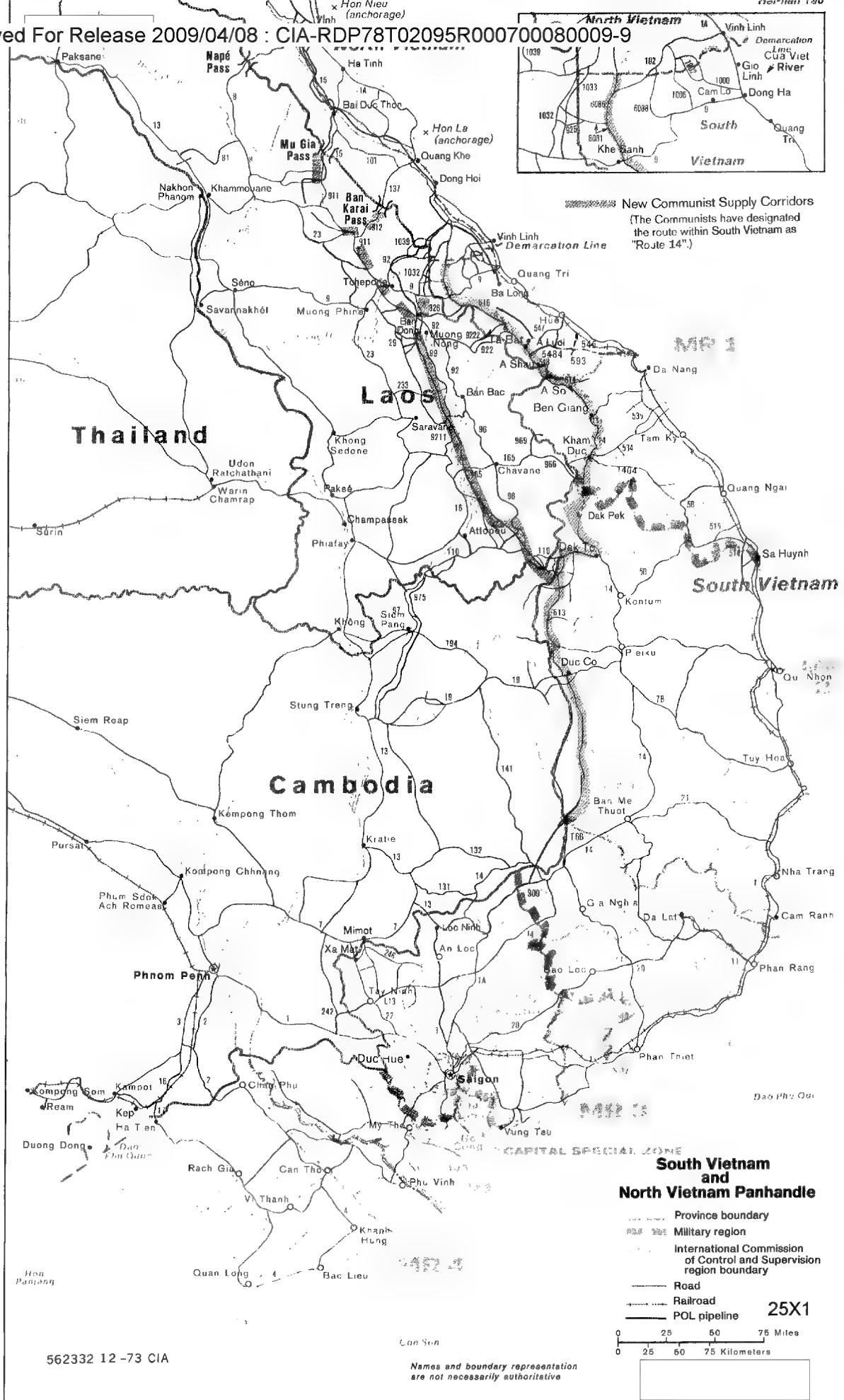
14. Photography [redacted] showed new construction and restoration of a series of roads leading from Communist Route 14 eastward to the northern defense line of Da Nang in Quang Nam Province, MR 1. A five-mile section of new road has been built connecting Route 5484 to Route 593 (see the transportation map). From this junction, repair activity was observed for 13 miles along non-motorable sections of Routes 593 and 545, which together lead into Da Nang City. The restoration work currently ends at a point about eight miles west of ARVN defense positions guarding the northern approach to Da Nang. When complete, these roads will considerably enhance the Communists' lateral network of motorable routes leading from rear bases and supply lines into the strategic lowlands.

15.

[redacted] construction crews are swiftly upgrading segments of Communist Route 14 between Dak Pek and Dak To in the western highlands of MR 2. Only about 15 miles of dual-lane grading between Dak To and a junction with Route 615 near the tri-border is needed to complete the Route 14 system between the DMZ and southern Darlac Province. A motorable single-lane road already is in service between Dak To and Route 615.

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North Vietnam Improves Its Armed Forces

16. Hanoi is improving its armed forces at home and in South Vietnam. The Communists are engaged in a substantial training effort, with special attention to fighting a large-scale conventional war using a mix of infantry, armor, artillery, and air defense forces. This training stresses standardization of equipment and seeks to produce high-quality troops and officers. Training programs have been reorganized, revitalized, and lengthened to make them more rigorous and broader in scope.

17. There was no major military recruitment drive in North Vietnam from February through July 1973. During this period, the new training programs probably were put into effect. The men inducted in the recruitment campaign last August and September probably received the extended training. Many of these troops, together with other cadre who may have been brought home earlier for training, probably returned to South Vietnam this dry season.

18. The North Vietnamese also have strengthened and reorganized their strategic reserve. Since early January 1973, Hanoi has brought home four infantry divisions -- one from Laos and three from South Vietnam -- and they have reactivated a division in the southern Panhandle of North Vietnam. The three divisions withdrawn from northern South Vietnam have been organized into what appears to be a readily deployable force, supported by armor, artillery, and engineer units. Recent press reports indicate Hanoi plans to use large-scale military exercises to test and evaluate the army's progress in learning how to fight a conventional war.

19. Communist forces in South Vietnam are now getting better trained troops as replacements, and they also have managed to improve coordination among their various forces. Communist briefers are telling their listeners that the new skills and techniques are already being tested. During last year's heavy fighting in the highlands, for example, North Vietnamese tanks, artillery, air defense, and infantry did in fact fight fairly well together.

20. The improvement Hanoi seems to envision for its armed forces, however, almost certainly demands much more time and work. If the effort is successful, North Vietnam will eventually develop a tougher, more effective fighting force.

Food Shortages

21. Recent evidence suggests a serious food shortage in the southern Panhandle and mountainous northern provinces of North Vietnam, as well as in some areas of northern South Vietnam and Laos. The relative severity of these shortages is difficult to judge.

[redacted] shortages reportedly of "near-famine" proportions are being experienced in a number of areas. To help alleviate these shortages, the Central Military Party Committee has imposed strict rationing for some North Vietnamese units in North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and Laos. It has ordered food rations to be reduced from April to the end of 1974. Rice rations in particular will be reduced by some 10%-15% during this period from the normal ration of 1-1/2 pounds of rice per day.

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22. North Vietnam's current food supply situation may well be strained, particularly in the traditionally food-deficit areas where the shortages are being reported. Stocks begin to run low in the months just before the May-June harvest, and additional rationing and conservation measures typically are then imposed on the populace. Last autumn's disappointing harvest and the recent spate of messages suggest that the situation this year is worse than usual. In addition to feeding the civilian populace in North Vietnam, Hanoi is committed to supplying its forces outside the country and the population under its control in northern South Vietnam. These demands represent only a small share of total food requirements, but they could intensify the pressure on North Vietnam's limited food supplies and its distribution system.

23. Although the shortages may be worse than usual in the affected areas, North Vietnam probably has the means to alleviate them. The autumn harvest produced about five months' supply of food. In addition, imports from Communist allies since November have added roughly another month's supply, indicating that sufficient food is available in the country, even if not where most needed.

ANNEX

INFILTRATION OF NORTH VIETNAMESE PERSONNEL
TO THE SOUTH

Since the implementation of the cease-fire settlement for South Vietnam on January 27, 1973, about 144,000 North Vietnamese troops and specialists have infiltrated southward. Some 119,000 of this total have started south since that time. Since June 15, 1973, when the original accord was reaffirmed, about 93,000 troops and specialists have been sent south. The following table shows the number of North Vietnamese troops starting south, by destination, since January 1, 1973.

Number of Troops Entering the Pipeline Destined
for South Vietnam, Southern Laos, and Cambodia
Since January 1, 1973¹

	COSVN	B-3 Front	MR 5	MR Tri-Thien	Southern Laos/ MR 559	Total
Total 1973	49,000	15,000	15,500	14,000	26,500	120,000
Jan-Mar	12,000	5,500	4,000	5,000	1,000	27,500
Apr-Jun	1,000	...	...	7,000	1,500	9,500
Jul-Aug	...	...	3,000	...	1,500	4,500
Sep	...	...	2,000	2,000	3,000	7,000
Oct	...	...	...	...	14,000	14,000
Nov	1,000	1,000	...	...	5,500	7,500
Dec	3,500	1,000	...	...	...	4,500
1974						
Jan	10,000	3,000	...	...	...	13,000
Feb	5,500	1,500	1,500	...	...	8,500
Mar	12,000	2,000	4,500	...	...	18,500
Apr 1-9	4,000	1,000	500	...	...	5,500

1. Excluding special-purpose personnel. The totals are rounded to the nearest 500.

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